

Fruits and Veggies at the Preschool

Background, resources and activities for teaching preschool children



Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of some types of cancer and other chronic diseases.

Background

The National Fruit and Vegetable Alliance (formerly the National 5 A Day for Better Health Program) promotes a simple, positive message – eat more fruits and veggies at every meal and snack. The Alliance's strength comes from the combined efforts and resources of its members. They include:

- American Cancer Society
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- California Department of Health Services
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Culinary Institute of America
- National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
- National Cancer Institute
- National Council of Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Coordinators
- Produce for Better Health Foundation
- Produce Marketing Association
- United Fresh Produce Association
- United States Department of Agriculture



Health Benefits

Eating more fruits and veggies helps you stay healthy. Fruits and veggies help maintain a healthy weight when they replace high fat foods. And, fruits and vegetables help reduce your risk for:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- Some cancers

Recommendations

Eating lots of fruits and vegetables every day is a key element of MyPyramid.gov which represents the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005*. **The daily amount for each preschooler varies by age, sex, and activity level.**

- ▶ For boys, the range is 2 to 3 cups
- ▶ For girls, the range is 2 to 2½ cups
- ▶ For recommendations for your child, visit www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov or call the Fruit and Vegetable Program for a free copy of *Three simple steps to eating more fruits and vegetables*.

Because too much fruit juice may lead to tooth decay and overweight. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting daily fruit juice to:

- ▶ 4-6 ounces per day for 1-6 year olds
- ▶ 8-12 ounces pre day for 7-18 year olds

Fact Sheet for Parents

"More Peas, Please!" a ready-to-copy fact sheet, provides parents of young children with ideas and recipes to help kids eat more fruits and veggies. It is now available in Spanish or English. Request a copy by phone or send an e-mail to fruitsandveggies@dhhs.state.nh.us.

Lending Library

The fruit and veggie materials in the DPHS Lending Library range from music CDs to videos to curricula with recipes, handouts, and activity ideas. Here's a sampling:

- *Eat the Alphabet* (book)
- *Growing Vegetable Soup* (book)
- *Color Way Creative Pockets Kit*
- *Fruit and Veggie Recall* (game)
- ▶ Materials can be delivered to your local NH public library.
- ▶ Call the program at 271-4830 for a **list of the audio-visual and print materials** in the collection.
- ▶ To **reserve or borrow** materials, call the DPHS Lending Library directly at 603-271-0562 or 603-271-7060.

Inside . . .

Frequently Asked Questions.....	2
Start a Fruit and Veggie Team	2
Recipes	2
Info Online	2
Quantity Recipe Cookbook	2
Activity Ideas	3

Frequently Asked Questions

What Are the Key Messages?

- Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables at every meal.
- Make fruits and veggies your first choice for snacks.
- Every step taken toward eating more fruits and veggies matters. Even the smallest effort to eat more makes a difference.

What Does a Tennis Ball Have to Do with Fruits and Vegetables?

Answer: 1 cup of fruit or vegetable is the same size as a tennis ball. Here are a few examples.

- Apple: 1 small
- Banana: 1 large
- Broccoli: 3 5-inch spears
- Carrots: 2 medium
- Grapefruit: 1 medium
- Peach: 1 large
- Potato: 1 medium



Leafy vegetables

- Raw spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, and lettuce are leafy vegetables.
- Because they have a lot of space between the leaves, 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables counts as ½ cup.
- ½ cup cooked leafy vegetables counts as ½ cup of your daily intake.

Dried fruit

- Raisins are dried grapes. Prunes are dried plums. Other dried fruits include apricots, dates and dried apples, mango and pineapple.
- As fruit dries, it gets smaller. For that reason, ¼ cup dried fruit counts as ½ cup.
- ▶ Call for a free copy of *What Does a Tennis Ball Have to Do with Fruits and Vegetables?*

What Counts?

All forms of fruits and veggies matter:

- Fresh
- Frozen
- Canned
- Dried
- 100 percent juices



Beans count, too! That includes beans in:

- Salads
- Soups and chili
- Burritos
- Dips and hummus

Start a Fruit and Veggie Team

Working with a team increases creativity and strengthens outcomes. Ask others to join your Fruit and Veggie Team to help you plan fruit and vegetable promotions at your preschool. Invite:

- Other program staff members
- Preschool nurse/health educator
- Public librarian
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Parents and grandparents
- Community dietitians – try the hospital's community education department
- College students from the nutrition, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nursing, and education departments

Fruit and Veggie Recipe Criteria

Recipes promoted with the Fruit and Vegetable Program contribute at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable per 250 calories. And, they are low in:

- Added sweeteners (including jams, jellies, and concentrated fruit juice sweeteners)
- Fat
- Saturated fat
- Trans fat
- Sodium

For details, contact the program at 603-271-4830.

Recipes and Tips Online

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

Produce for Better Health Foundation

www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

www.pbhfoundation.org



Quantity Recipe Cookbook

Do you need delicious and healthy recipes that serve 25-100? Here's a great resource! All 40 fruit and veggie based recipes conform to USDA recipe format.

Download a copy today at

www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/NHP/fruitsandveggies. The cookbook will be updated to meet the new recipe criteria by Jan 2009.

Activity Ideas

Plan a Special Week!

- Do one or two fruit and veggie activities each day.
- Hold a challenge for students and their families.
- If you prepare meals on site, offer healthy fruit and veggie choices
- End the week with a celebration. Invite parents and grandparents. Include fruit and veggie costumes, hats, placemats, and music.
- ▶ For details see pages 3-4.

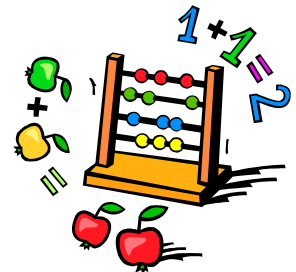
Music and Language Arts

- Name a fruit or vegetable for every letter of the alphabet.
- Ask your librarian or a bookstore about stories, riddles, poetry, and music about fruits, vegetables, gardens, orchards, shopping, cooking, eating, and physical activity.
- ▶ Call us for a copy of the *Fruit and Veggie Book List*.
- ▶ Borrow music from the Lending Library (see page 1). Many include ideas for dancing and movement:
 - *Groovin' Foods Music CD*
 - *Smart Fruit and Veggie Songs Music CD*
 - *Veggie Power! Music CD*



Flavors and Smells

- Try different fruits and vegetables. Talk about the different flavors, textures and smells.
- Hold a "blind" taste test – using a blind fold. Can students name the fruit or vegetable they are tasting?



Cooking

- Offer a "24 Karat Luncheon" with carrot sticks, carrot soup, and carrot cake.
- Demonstrate a fruit or veggie recipe.
- Try a recipe from another country.



Shapes and Numbers

- Count the seeds in one apple, pear, grapefruit, orange, slice of banana. Count the eyes on a potato.
- Serves slices of star fruit, banana, and carrots. Cut the banana on an angle to get ovals.
- Compare the shapes of different fruits and vegetables – for example: broccoli, banana, squash, apple and different melons.
- Cut an apple in half – horizontally – to reveal a star.
- Introduce elementary fractions by cutting an apple in half and then quarters.

The World

- Where do fruits and vegetables grow? How does produce get to our stores?
- Go online and research this festival: the Feast of Radishes (December 23 in Oaxaca, Mexico). Create ways you can celebrate with your students.



- Ask students to bring in donations – canned fruits and vegetables – for the local food bank.

Voting

Have students vote for their favorite fruit and vegetables. This is a great way to introduce math and graphing concepts.

- Link this activity to a taste test so the children get a chance to learn about the "candidates."
- Set up a poster-size fruit and vegetable ballot with pictures of each "candidate." Give each child two stickers to use for placing their votes for one fruit and one vegetable. Invite adults to participate.
- This makes a great media event – invite the press!
- ▶ For more ideas, request a copy of *It's an Election Year . . . Run a Produce Campaign!*



Movement

- **Beanbag Games** Use fruit and veggie beanbags in games.
- **Team Names** Name teams for fruits and veggies that are fuzzy; shiny; purple; red; etc.
- **Imagination** Imitate a growing seed, an apple tree during a storm; a cherry tree being visited by birds; an ear of corn being picked, husked, boiled, and eaten!
- **Produce Relay** Have players use a spoon to balance increasingly bigger fruits and vegetables – a grape, an apricot, an orange, and a potato.
- **Fruit Basket Upset** Form a circle and sit on the floor. Have each student pick a fruit name. Ask for a volunteer to stand in the center. The child in the center calls the names of two or more fruits. The students with those names get up and run to exchange places before the caller gets their spot. The one without a spot is the new caller. If the caller says "Fruit Basket Upset," everyone exchanges places.
- **Beans, Beans, Corn.** (Duck, Duck, Goose) Sit on the floor in a circle. "It" begins by walking around the circle saying "beans, beans, beans,..." until s/he taps someone and says "corn." The two run in opposite directions, trying to get back to the empty space first. The one who does not is the new "it."
- **The Talking Turnip** (Mother May I) Use active commands like, "The Talking Turnip says play tennis . . . jump rope . . . swim . . . run in place . . . tap your shoulders . . . eat a carrot . . . plant a garden."
- **Raining on the Orchard** Form a circle; arms-length apart. The leader stands in the center facing one person and rubs his/her hands together. As the leader slowly turns in place, the circle gradually joins in. Repeat with louder actions – snapping fingers, slapping thighs, stamping feet! Then, reverse until the storm is over.



Take the Challenge

Challenge students and their families to:

- Taste a new fruit or vegetable every day for a week. Offer the item in the classroom and cooking information for the parents.
 - Try a new fruit or vegetable recipe.
- Students can track their progress by adding fruit and vegetable stickers to a headband.



Gardening

- Plant something in the classroom and watch it grow. Try date, orange or grapefruit seeds. Grow an avocado seed or sweet potato in a jar of water.
 - Take a field trip to a greenhouse or farm.
 - Name produce items that grow on trees, in the ground. Which are roots, leaves, seeds, seed pods, stems, fruits?
 - Plant a garden. Libraries and seed catalogs may be helpful sources of information. Seed catalogs are good sources of photos and required growing conditions.
 - Plant a pizza garden with basil, tomatoes, broccoli, onions, etc. Serve your harvest at a pizza party.
- Check **Resources for Promoting Fruits and Veggies** for organizations that offer free seeds.
- For expert gardening advice and more, call the **UNH Cooperative Extension Family, Home and Garden Education Center** at 877-EXT-GROW (877-398-4769).



Colors and Textures

- Study the colors and textures of fruits and veggies. Make a drawing, painting, or collage of a basket filled with produce.
- Make fruit and vegetable placemats, magnets, hats, and headbands.
- Dress in the color of your favorite fruit or veggie.
- Name fruits and vegetables that are fuzzy, shiny, rough, red, green, purple, etc.
- Put different fruits/vegetables (one at a time) inside a "mystery box" and have students guess what's inside.
- Start with a picture of a fruit bowl or basket on Monday. Each day, taste a new produce item and add it to the picture. By the end of the week the collage will be complete!

Do you have a new idea
for teaching preschoolers about
fruits and veggies?
We have room for
your original idea!
Email us at

fruitsandveggies@dhhs.state.nh.us